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Hall says bosses were: 'Tinker,' 'Evers,' 'Chance'

By Andrew Selsky
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MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Sam Nesley Hall, a self-styled "counterterrorist," said yesterday that he was spying on military installations for three men code-named "Tinker," "Evers" and "Chance" when the Nicaraguan government arrested him.

But Hall said he was not working for the U.S. government during the operation that led to his arrest on Dec. 12 in a restricted area near Punta Huete air force base, outside Managua.

Hall said he did not know the actual identities of three men other than that "Tinker" was based in Washington, "Evers" in England and "Chance" in Miami.

Tinker, Evers and Chance were a legendary double-play combination for the Chicago Cubs in the early 1900s.

Hall spoke at news conference arranged by Nicaraguan officials, who cut him off when he began to talk about entering a second Nicaraguan air base.

Describing his mission in Nicaragua, Hall said that "my sole purpose is to find information only ... I carried no weapons. I came out of retirement in civilian life to run simple reconnaissance."

"There was information that needed confirmation, that on one of the large bases here there were Cuban crews assembling Soviet helicopters," he said.

"I was also to see what new construction was under way, such as fuel storage tanks," he said.

When asked who he was gathering information for, and for what purpose, Hall replied, "I have no idea."

Twenty-five minutes into the news conference, two state security officers behind Hall abruptly pulled him from his chair when he began describing his activities the night before his arrest.

"I understand if I do not say anything about the first night it would be better for me," Hall said. "The first night I penetrated two bases ..."

At that point, he was silenced as security men hustled him away.

Capt. Nelba Blandon, an Interior Ministry spokeswoman, would not say why Hall was kept from talking further. She added that he had said nothing new about his penetration of the second base and that it had been mentioned in an Interior Ministry statement.

The ministry's statements so far have mentioned only Punta Huete.

Capt. Oscar Loza, an Interior Ministry official, showed reporters copies

of handmade maps and sketches that the government says were found stuffed in one of Hall's socks. The maps were drawn in a child-like scrawl, with notes on the side.

One was a rough sketch of Nicaragua. Another, inside a folder labeled "Case: Rambo," was a sketch of Puerto Cabezas, a Nicaraguan port on the Caribbean, 120 miles northeast of Managua.

Next to it were notes saying, "CUBA — attack sub. frigate — 2, patrol boats — 64," and listed the number of Soviet-made helicopters in an airfield in Managua.

During the news conference, Hall, 49, said that he volunteered for military service, but received a medical discharge. He did not specify what branch he was in or what the nature of the discharge was.

Hall also said that in November 1984 he was invited to a meeting at the Pentagon and was sent that afternoon for an interview at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., but that nothing came of it.

He said that the Pentagon meeting was to create a so-called "Phoenix Battalion" at a cost of \$14 million to \$19 million, but the idea was eventually dropped as too costly. He did not say why the battalion was to be created.

According to Hall, he was picked up for the job in Nicaragua on Dec. 8 and was paid \$12,500. He refused to elaborate other than to say he was not working for the U.S. government.

"I am not working for the U.S. government that I know of, and I can honestly say it," he said, adding that

he was willing to take "truth serum" or a lie detector test to prove that.

Asked what his trip here had to do with his alleged visit to CIA headquarters two years ago, Hall replied, "Nothing."

President Daniel Ortega says that Hall was spotting military targets for possible aerial bombardment by the United States and suggested that Hall was mentally unbalanced.

Hall, brother of Democratic Rep. Tony Hall of Ohio, is the second U.S. citizen captured in Nicaragua in recent months in connection with the war between the leftist Sandinista government and U.S.-backed contra rebels.

The other American, Eugene Hasenfus, was pardoned and sent home last week after serving about a month of a 30-year jail sentence imposed for gunrunning to the rebels.

Ortega said Hall would be tried before a People's Tribunal, the court that convicted Hasenfus.

The Reuters news agency contributed to this article.

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